**Artefacts (1-10)**

Disclaimer: These are just some of the many artefacts that would be on display.

For convenience sake, the list of artefacts has been split up into several main categories:

Group 1: (held at where? Javier do… this…)

Social Hierachy & Society

Group 2: (Javier…)

Trade & Economy

Group 3:

Science & The Arts

Group 4:

Complex Culture & Belief System

Group 5:

Weapons & Warfare

(Ms teo say refer to RAFFLES HERITAGE CENTRE for more info on display, JAVIER DO THIS!!!)



**Society**

In present time, social hierarchy is marked by occupation and wealth. So, in Aztec Civilization, how did a gold mask and clothes signify social hierarchy? Also, a social hierarchy pyramid is attached for more information regarding Aztec’s social structure. So, read on to find out!

Artefact 1: Gold Mask

Artefact 2: Clothes worn by nobles, coupled with accessories on display

Additional Facts: Social Hierarchy Pyramid



**Gold Mask**

This gold mask was found at a tomb at Monte Albam-the mask of the god Xipe Totec. Xipe Totec is the patron of goldsmiths and the god of agricultural renewal, associated with spring ad rebirth. Hence, this mask symbolized the hope of rejuvenation and prosperity of the people. Burying the mask in the tomb was a symbolic act as the noble planned to carry this mask with him to the afterlife.

Moreover, since the Aztecs’ clothing was relatively simple, the gold mask was a mark of status and luxury. It belonged to one of the nobles (pipiltin), they had more privileges as compared to the commoners (macehualli). They were richer and hence could afford to buy gold jewellery such as this mask.

Specialized craft smiths designed this mask, as they had to be highly skilled in order to capture the religious meaning of Xipe Totec and portray it accurately. This made the mask an extremely sacred masterpiece, symbolizing religious beliefs and also luxury and nobility.

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This is interesting and can be put together with the social hierarchy and organised in your exhibition as society, hence Artefact 3 will be together here. Also, you will want to source for jewellery, clothes, hairpins or any accessories etc to support this picture

**A group of Nobles**

In Aztec society, the Aztecs believed that everyone has a right social place and role. In the social hierachy, the nobles were a higher rank than the commoners, hence an efffective way to mark this diffference in social status is through clothes and attire.

According to Montezuma’s Law Code: The nobles(pipiltin) were allowed to wear cotton mantles of certain make and design, and the minor lords, according to their valor and accomplishments, may wear others. Also, only the great lords are to wear labrets(lip plugs), ear plugs and nose plugs of gold and precious stones. The commoners were not allowed to wear cotton clothing, under pain of death, they can only use garments made of maguey fiber.

As seen in the (top-left) picture, gold was an important adornment to a noble's dress. Other accessories to noble dress were feathers on the head and on their robes.



**Aztec labrets**



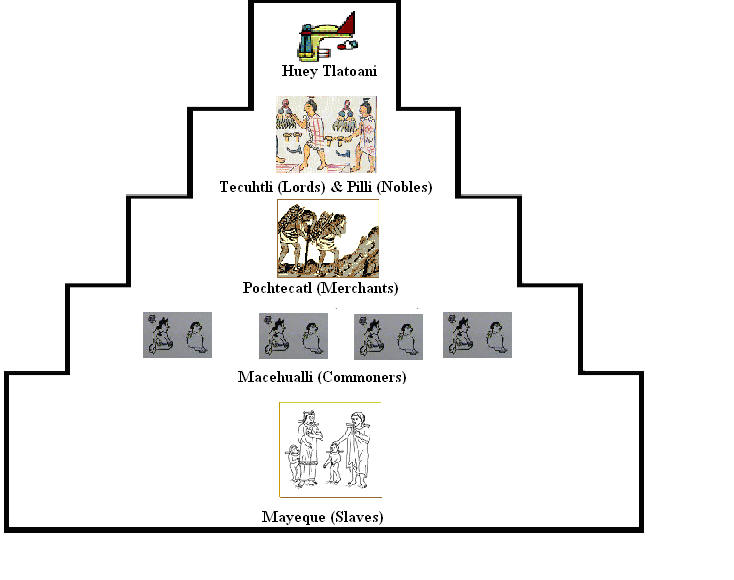
**Aztec Ear Plugs**

Bright colours signified that the individual was of high rank. They often dressed in this manner to draw attention to themselves by communicating their status and wealth they had obtained. Another purpose of noble dress was to show that they were involved in government and were important religious leaders. However, the most important purpose was to show off their power and authority to the commoners.



**Aztec nose plug, xiuhyacamitl**

Social Hierachy in Aztec: ***(Note: this is not an artefact, it is meant to tie in with the previous artefact)***



***Picture taken from Google Images(hyperlink listed in Bibliography)***

The highest level that is shown in the pyramid is the Huey Tlatoani, he is the chief speaker who is elected by a selected group of nobles.

The 2nd level shown in the pyramid comprises of the lords and nobles. However, the 2nd level is actually made up of 3 levels. The highest is the prime minister who carries out most of the day-to-day business of the government and oversees the financial matters. Next is the highly placed nobles who had distinguished themselves by their valor in battle or in some other way. Next is the nobles in general who were basically the ruling class with more privileges.

The 3rd level shown in the pyramid is the merchants. They often accummulated a great deal of money and luxuries due to trading. They also act as spies for the government(wow!) when they visit neighbouring cities and countries.

The 4th level shown in the pyramid is the commoners. They were basically ordinary labourers such as farmers, fishermen, weavers, carpenters, etc.

The last level shown in the pyramid is the slaves. Though they were free men, they depended heavily on the rich lords they worked for. Thankfully, the slave status is not hereditary.



**Barter Trade:**

**A humble cacao bean. Under a pure brown surface, it contains the essence of trade, supporting the backbone of the Aztec economy. What other uses does a cacao bean serve, find out more!**

Artefact 3:

Cacao beans



Cacao beans:

Merchants and traders conducted barter trade in the market using Cacao beans as the main form of currency. An Aztec document containing a list of price equivalents designated the value of a tomato as one cacao bean, while an avocado was worth three, and a "good turkey hen" was worth 100 "full" or 120 "shrunken" cacao beans.

Cacao beans played an important role in barter trade which was vital to the succes of Aztec Civilization due to the fact that there would always be extras and shortages in the production of goods. Hence, trading away the surpluses to fill up the shortages ensure that the Aztecs would have sufficient food in their daily lives.

With Cacao beans as an established currency to ease trade, merchants from neighbouring countries were attracted to bring in goods not found in Aztec, while the civllians from different occupations brought in different goods, ensuring a wide diversity of goods. This satisfied the different needs of the civilians and sustainied a sophisticated lifestyle.

The existence of Cacao beans encouraged trading on a wider scale, bringing about mutual benefits. It allowed Aztec to forge alliances with other countries, and partly gave rose to the Triple Alliance. (Aztec merged with Acolhua, and Huexotzinco to form a triple alliance to defeat the Tepanecs.)

Moreover, trade encourages exchange of ideas and new inventions. For example, bater trade was coined due to the need for a common platform to trade when there was no common currency.

Thanks to the Cacao beans which supported trade, Aztec civillains could concentrate on producing their own goods without having to worry about the goods that they are unable to produce. This allowed Aztec to concentrate on mass production of their goods, causing Aztec to thrive and prosper.

Besides trade, Cacao beans had medicinal properties and could be served as a drink. Though not yet fully confirmed, these “multi-usage” of Cacao beans showcased Aztec’s ingenuity and creativity to fully exploit their resources. A simple Cacao bean, a wide web of ingenuity, and that makes Aztec great.



**Golden Age:**

**At a time of international stability and unity, people could think of ways to improve their lives. It was a period of great progress where civilians were encouraged to be creative and innovative, thereby making groundbreaking scientific advances, technological advances and cultural achievements. They either improved on existing technologies or create new inventions. This also led to a more comfortable and sophisticated lifestyle of the civilians, benefiting the civilians and the civilization as a whole. How did a soalr calendar showcase the beliefs of Aztec? Find out more in this exhibition!**

Artefact 4: Science advancement- Aztec Solar Calendar

Artefact 5: Cultural achievement-Literature and Writing System



**Aztec Solar Calendar:**

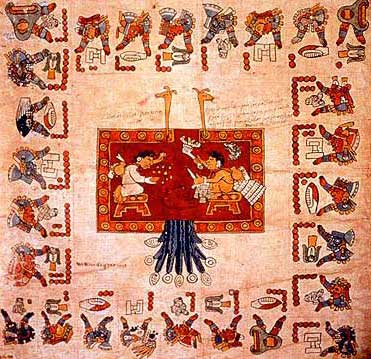
The Aztecs were fascinated by the objects in the night sky, such as the moon, stars, planets, comets and other celestial phenomenons. Without using telescopes or any sophisticated equipment, Aztecs figured out that every year had 365 years from their observations. This was an amazing feat considering that they did not use telescopes or any sophisticated equipment, it was pure obeservation.

Hence, they created the Aztec Solar Calendar(Xiuhpohualli). It consists of the 365 days in a year, and was used to keep track of the seasons and various monthly events. It also consists of the 260 day ritual cycle which keeps track of religious observances and ceremonies.

Surrounding the god's face (located in the middle) are panels representing the four previous creations and destructions of the earth. Around these panels is a ring of symbols, representing the twenty days of the Aztec month. They named 18 months, and divided each group of twenty days into four weeks of five days each. Market days were held once each week.

The animals at the side of the calendar had special meanings. Merchants knew that they should only begin their journey on 1 Alligator, 1 Monkey, 7 Serpent or the best 1 Serpent, called the “straight way”. Approaching home, they would also delay on the route to wait for a good-day sign for the homecoming. Moreover, farmers relied on the signs of the days rather than the sign of the fields when harvesting. Furthermore, Aztec priests used the calendar to predict the fates of people. Hence, we can conclude that the Aztecs believed that timing and sign of days were crucial in maintaning a balanced world.

The complexity of the Aztec solar calendar and astronomial record demonstrates their advancement in the science and arts and how it had affected their lives and culture.



**Aztec Codice: Codex Borbonicus**

Aztec literature was written down in books which folded like a fan. These books were hand-written on paper made out of agarve plant fiber. They are called codices. This indicated that the Aztecs were literate and had developed a form of writing system. Aztec writing consisted of a mixture of pictures and glyphs, the glyphs were picturelike signs that represented a word, concept or name.

The Codex Borbonicus shows the Aztec creation god (Ometecuhtli) and goddess (Omecihuatl). According to Aztec legend, these first Aztec deities had four sons whose rivalry resulted in the creation and destruction of four worlds. Aztecs believed they lived in the fifth world, which was created when the four sons were reunited. Surrounding the god and goddess on this page are symbols for the *tonalpohualli*, or day count of the sacred calendar. The twenty signs shown in the glyphs are combined with the numbers 1 through 13, shown by the dots in the codex. Today, more than 500 codices containing material on myths, histories, religious hymns and poetry have survived. They revealed information regarding Aztec’s ideas and culture.

Indeed, the writing system provided a common and vital communication system. Besides literature, the scribes were multi-talented and could produce sculptures and painting. Hence, “[Art and literature is the signature of civilizations](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/art_is_the_signature_of_civilizations/200501.html),” is a strong testament to Aztec’s richness of the arts. To date, these cultural achievements identified Aztec as an artistically rich society with arts, literature and aesthetic advances.

Instead of picture of scribe, how about the old letters or any writings to show the development of writing. You can even have the ancient brushes, ink slabs etc .... more meaningful than the pciture of the scribes



**Myths and religious beliefs:**

**When civilians settled down and had free time, they started pondering about life, death and celestial phenomenon. Slowly, they developed creation myths which resulted in rituals, customs and taboos, thereby forming a complex culture and belief system. How was religion regarded by the civilians? How was it used by the government? Find out more, right now!**

Artefact 6: Human Sacrifice

Artefact 7: Great Temple of Tenochtitlan

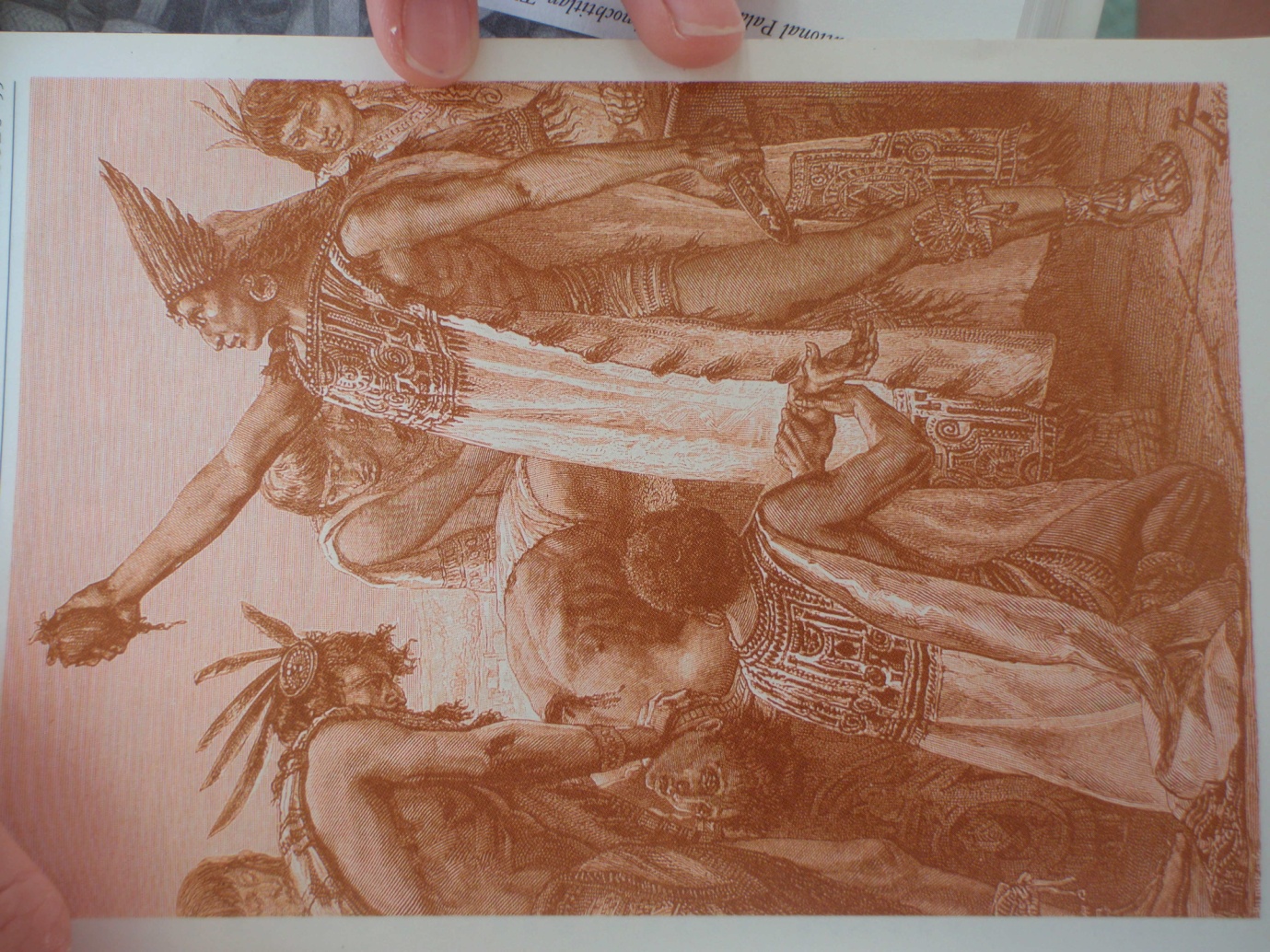


**Aztec Sacrificial/Flint Knife**

The Aztecs believed that the gods sacrificed themselves for the world to exist, so they had to repay this favour by offering the gods a gift: human blood. Hence, they carried out human sacrifices. They also felt that human sacrifice was necessary to ensure that the rains returned and the soil remained fertile, since they depended on agriculture.

Using a flint knife (top-left), the head priest opens the chest of the victim and extracts the heart. The victim wore ixiptla (the ornaments and clothing of the gods). During the sacrifice (top-right), the god was believed to enter the victim’s body; man and god united in a single being, to allow divine power to manifest itself before the crowd.

How will this be aligned to your proposal? Is this also a picture drawn to depict sacrifice not an artefact? What conclusion can you make from this depiction about use of sacrifice?



**Process of Human Sacrifice**

These sacrifices were strongly encouraged by the government as they were a “policy of terror”, showing the commoners that the priests and rulers were in charge. Sometimes, the Aztec government invited foreign dignitaries as they performed the blood sacrifice on their prisoners, serving as an intimidation tool and to emphasize their power.

The Aztec civilians viewed the sacrifice as noble and sacred act which was dedicated to the gods. However, human sacrifice was actually a religious propaganda used by the government to form the basis of a cohesive and orderly society.



**Artist’s impression- Great Temple of Tenochtitlan:**

The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan was a major archeological achievement. It was a twin-stair pyramid as it had two staircases, and its summit had two temples. The temple on the left side honored Tlaloc, the god responsible for providing a good rain season and an abundant harvest. His temple was decorated blue and white, the colours that symbolized water and moisture. The temple on the right was dedicated to the war god, Huitzilopochtli. It was painted in red and white in recognition of war.

Aztec archeology was hugely affected by their reverence for nature and religious beliefs, as shown by the Great Temple. The Great Temple was very tall and steep, as the gods lived in the sky and above the people. Being at the summit of the pyramid was the closest a person could be to gods.

Get a artifact from this temple and use this picture as background. Again, rephrase



**Excavation site-Great Temple of Tenochtitlan**

Pyramid-temples, like the Great Temple, were built to strengthen and impose the Aztec religion and world view. They were believed to represent mountains, which were sources of water and fertility, and had a huge impact in agriculture. They also served as important sanctuaries where religious rituals were held, for example human sacrifice.

*Extra Information:*

*The temple was discovered and began to be unearthed about three decades ago, after electric company workers accidentally found, in 1978, a big carved monolith beneath the street level. The monolith was determined by archeologists to be a representation of Coyolxauqui, the Mexica’s moon goddess. This surprising discovery triggered the excavation of full city block to which led to the amazing discovery of the Templo Mayor. The discoveries turned the area into an ongoing archaeological site where a museum was later built.*

Besides religious purposes, the Great Temple played a huge role in government. In order to convince civilians that they were ordained by gods, they sponsored the building of the Great Temple, to create a sense of religious piety and imperial power. Therefore, it made it easier for the government to use religious propaganda to rule over Aztec, and form a cohesive and orderly society.

some paragraphs and draw conclusions about the impact or consequence with this as evidence



**Weapons and Warfare:**

**Warfare was one of the dominants concerns and enterprises of the Aztec Civilization. Aztec went to war to acquire new territories and human subjects to rule, thereby strengthening Aztec’s power and might. Hence, weapon and warfare were credited as one of the major features that led to the rapid rise of Aztec. This exciting display will feature Aztec weapons and the uses of them. So, what are you waiting for?**

Artefact 8: Weapons and Warfare



**Aztec weapon-Atlatl:**

Atlatl is a kind of throwing stick, it is roughly 18 inches long and consists of a wooden handle with a groove. The warrior placed a dart or short spear inside the groove and then fired the weaon by flipping the stick in a forceful overhand motion. The Aztecs also had several weapons, like the maquauhuitl , the bow and arrow, slingshots and many more. The variety of weapons indicated that the Aztecs were highly skilled in using their weapons in battles, and deadly in their warfare.

Warfare was one of the dominant concerns and enterprises of Aztec civilization, so Aztec had military prowness. Warrior-orientated themes and institutions were prominent at all levels of society, even young boys were exposed to combat at birth. Male education at schools emphasized military skills and values, and served to create warriors. Since young boys were educated about warfare from young, the Aztec army was extremely talented in combat.

Moreover, Aztec males’ identity was largely defined by his success in warfare. Although social status in Aztec society was largely predetermined by family lineage , warfare provided a means of climbing the social ladder. Young warriors elevated their social status by taking captives in battle and more importantly, they secured their status for descendants. Those valiant and successful warriors enjoyed a social status second only to the king and a few highly-ranked priests and military generals. Since being a warrior brought about huge benefits, many Aztecs volunteeered to be warriors, so there was never a shortage a manpower, instead they were superior in numbers.

This superiority allowed the Aztecs to successfully defeat their enemies in war and pleased their war god, Huitzilopochtli. Winning a war brought about huge benefits, as the Aztec government accquired new territory to expand and boost their status and power. Moreover, the Aztec’s economy also prospered as the conquered subjects had to offer tribute to the Aztec King. In this way, the Aztecs were assured of a steady inflow of foodstuffs, cloth, weapons, building materials, paper, feather and other decorative items and so forth. Hence, the Aztec could use the resources to further improve their infrastructure, and the daily lives of the civillains, benefiting the civilization as a whole.

“modern” weaponry compared to their enemies? Impact of conquest – rephrase your last paragraph to make it analysis



**Chinampas:**

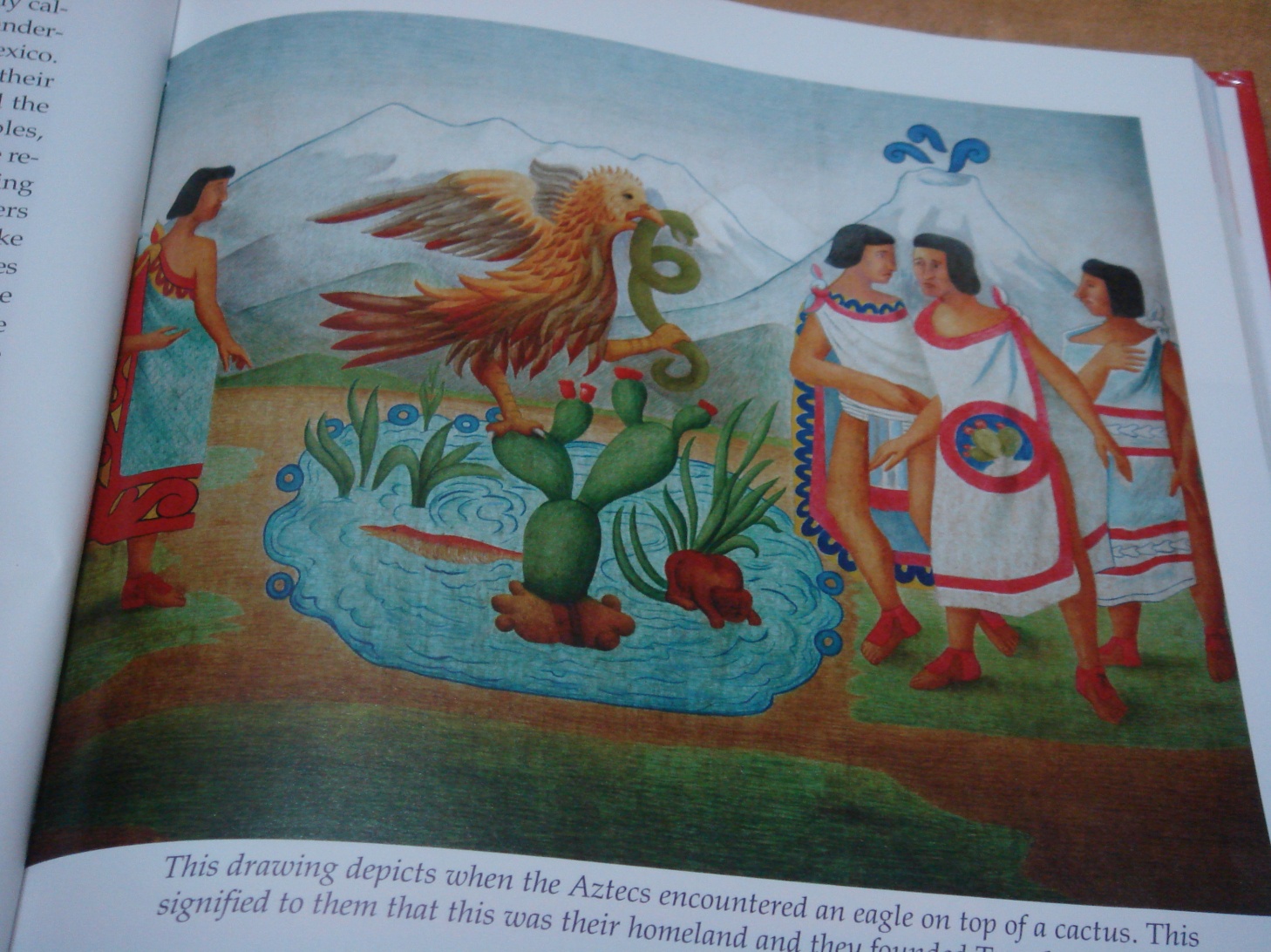
After finding their homeland, The Aztecs built Chinampas. They were artificial islands made by weaving giant reed mats and covering them with mudded plants. These were used to extend crops into the swamp as they provided fertile soil and extra land to ensure a steady source of food even during times of flood.

This paved the way for the Aztecs towards an agrarian-based society. Aztec civilians depended heavily on agriculture, as they made sure that there are sufficient crops produced to support the towns and cities, and also their livestock.

The macehualli, otherwise known as the commoners, worked the land. Over the years, the Aztec civilians invented different farming techniques to produce better harvest. Hence, less people were needed to farm and these freed up time, introducing labour specialization. There was diversification of jobs and people became merchants, traders, craftsmen, palace cleaners, etc.

Besides solely using agriculture as a source of food, they practiced specialized agriculture. When the conditions were right to successful cultivate food surpluses, farmers grew crops that were not a source of food to prepare for future times of need. The surpluses produced were either stored or brought to the marketplace, and used for trading and selling, allowing the Aztec Civilization to develop the agricultural system to nearly perfection.

Any ancient tools used by the Aztecs that can be exhibited to complement this picture, else this picture be just depicting life from images and not an artefact

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**The Great Migration:**

Aztecs(named after Aztlan) migrated Southwards from Aztlan to Mexico as they believed that the gods had ordered them to do so. Their fierce patron god, Huitzilopochtli said that they would eventually see a disrict sign indicating that they had reached their ulitmate homeland. That sign would consisit of a big eagle sitting on a cactus growing out of a rock.

When they encountered with the eagle resting on top of the cactus, they were certain they had found their homeland as prophesised. Hence, they ended their nomadic lifestyle and settled down in large communities, forming cities. They started out to establish the capital city, naming it Tenochitlan, which means “place of the cactus on the rock”.

Grateful to the eagle which signified their rightful hometown, they worshipped the eagle for its grace, reverence, greatness and excellence. These beliefs formed a long-lasting culture until today, as the current Mexican flag shows a mighty eagle perched atop a cactus on rock.

Would you want to put this as your opening to the exhibition – entrance poster – if so will not be called the great migration but the history and background to their establishment.